

Senate Bill 160

By: Senators Balfour of the 9th, Hooks of the 14th, Staton of the 18th, Davis of the 22nd, Murphy of the 27th and others

AS PASSED SENATE

**A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT**

To amend Article 2 of Chapter 5 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to campaign contributions, so as to authorize public utility corporations that are regulated by the Public Service Commission to make political campaign contributions; to provide for exceptions; to prohibit certain contributions to candidates for and members of the Public Service Commission; to provide for related matters; to repeal conflicting laws; and for other purposes.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF GEORGIA:

SECTION 1.

Article 2 of Chapter 5 of Title 21 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated, relating to campaign contributions, is amended by revising subsection (f) of Code Section 21-5-30, relating to contributions made to candidate or campaign committee or for recall of a public officer, as follows:

~~"(f)(1) A person acting on behalf of~~ For purposes of this subsection, the term:

(A) 'Public utility corporation regulated by the Public Service Commission' includes, but is not limited to, an electric membership corporation.

(B) 'Electric membership corporation' means a public utility corporation regulated by the Public Service Commission operating as an electric membership corporation under the provisions of Article 4 of Chapter 3 of Title 46.

(2) Except as limited by Code Section 21-5-30.1 or this subsection, a public utility corporation regulated by the Public Service Commission shall ~~not make, directly or indirectly, any contribution~~ be allowed to make contributions to a political campaign campaigns. ~~This subsection shall not apply to motor carriers whose rates are not regulated by the Public Service Commission. Any person who knowingly violates this subsection with respect to a member of the Public Service Commission, a candidate for the Public Service Commission, or the campaign committee of a candidate for the Public Service Commission shall be guilty of a felony and shall be punished by imprisonment~~

~~for not less than one nor more than five years or by a fine not to exceed \$10,000.00, or both; and any person who knowingly violates this subsection with respect to any other public officer, a candidate for such other public office, or the campaign committee of a candidate for such other public office shall be guilty of a misdemeanor~~ Any contributions made by a public utility corporation regulated by the Public Service Commission to a political campaign shall not be included as recoverable costs in any rate-making or rate-setting proceedings before the Public Service Commission. Notwithstanding the provisions of this Code section or any other provision of law to the contrary, no electric membership corporation and no nonprofit corporation, group, or association, the membership of which consists of electric membership corporations, shall be authorized to make any contribution to a political campaign. Notwithstanding the foregoing, nothing in this Code section shall be construed to prohibit a nonprofit corporation, group, or association, the membership of which consists of electric membership corporations, from establishing, administering, and soliciting contributions for a political action committee from officers, directors, employees, agents, contractors, and members of such entities so long as such actions and contributions do not otherwise violate the provisions of this chapter."

SECTION 2.

Said article is further amended by revising Code Section 21-5-30.1, relating to contributions by regulated entities to elected executive officers or candidates, as follows:

"21-5-30.1.

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the definitions set forth in Code Section 21-5-3 shall be applicable to the provisions of this Code section. As used in this Code section, the term:

(1) 'Campaign committee' means the candidate, person, or committee which accepts contributions to bring about the nomination for election or election of an individual to the office of an elected executive officer.

(2) 'Contribution' means a gift, subscription, membership, loan, forgiveness of debt, advance or deposit of money, or anything of value conveyed or transferred for the purpose of influencing the nomination for election or election of an individual to the office of an elected executive officer or encouraging the holder of such office to seek reelection. The term 'contribution' shall include the payment of a qualifying fee for and on behalf of a candidate for the office of an elected executive officer and any other payment or purchase made for and on behalf of the holder of the office of an elected executive officer or for or on behalf of a candidate for that office when such payment or purchase is made for the purpose of influencing the nomination for election or election

of the candidate and is made pursuant to the request or authority of the holder of such office, the candidate, the campaign committee of the candidate, or any other agent of the holder of such office or the candidate. The term 'contribution' shall not include the value of personal services performed by persons who serve on a voluntary basis without compensation from any source.

(3) 'Elected executive officer' means the Secretary of State, Attorney General, State School Superintendent, Commissioner of Insurance, Commissioner of Agriculture, ~~and~~ Commissioner of Labor, and members of the Public Service Commission.

(4) 'Political action committee' means any committee, club, association, partnership, corporation, labor union, or other group of persons which receives donations aggregating in excess of \$1,000.00 during a calendar year from persons who are members or supporters of the committee and which distributes these funds as contributions to one or more campaign committees of candidates for public office. Such term does not mean a campaign committee.

(5) 'Regulated entity' means any person who is required by law to be licensed by an elected executive officer or a board under the jurisdiction of an elected executive officer, any person who leases property owned by or for a state department, ~~or~~ any person who engages in a business or profession which is regulated by an elected executive officer or by a board under the jurisdiction of an elected executive officer, or any public utility corporation regulated by the Public Service Commission. For purposes of this paragraph, public utility corporation regulated by the Public Service Commission shall have the same meaning as provided by subsection (f) of Code Section 21-5-30.

(b) No regulated entity and no person or political action committee acting on behalf of a regulated entity shall make a contribution to or on behalf of a person holding office as an elected executive officer regulating such entity or to or on behalf of a candidate for the office of an elected executive officer regulating such entity or to or on behalf of a campaign committee of any such candidate.

(c) No person holding office as an elected executive officer and no candidate for the office of an elected executive officer and no campaign committee of a candidate for the office of an elected executive officer shall accept a contribution in violation of subsection (b) of this Code section.

(d) Nothing contained in this Code section shall be construed to prevent any person who may be employed by a regulated entity, including a person in whose name a license or lease is held, or who is an officer of a regulated entity from voluntarily making a campaign contribution from that person's personal funds to or on behalf of a person holding office as an elected executive officer regulating such entity or to or on behalf of a candidate for the

99 office of an elected executive officer regulating such entity or to or on behalf of a campaign
100 committee of any such candidate; provided, however, that:
101 (1) The elected executive officer or candidate receiving one or more campaign
102 contributions described in this subsection shall in his or her disclosure report under Code
103 Section 21-5-34 separately identify each contribution and the total of contributions which
104 he or she knows or should have reason to know are described in this subsection; and
105 (2) It shall be unlawful for any regulated entity or elected executive officer to require
106 another by coercive action to make any such contribution."

107 **SECTION 3.**

108 All laws and parts of laws in conflict with this Act are repealed.